

December 1, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: ALL SERVICE CENTER DIRECTORS - 5PT1, 5PT2, 5PT3,
5PT4, 5PT5

FROM: THOMAS J. O'BRIEN, MANAGER
FIRE PROTECTION & SAFETY BRANCH – 5PLF

SUBJECT: Space Heater Guidelines

Now that winter is upon us in the Midwest, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all Property Managers that the Facility Management Regulations (102-74.190) require that any space heater brought into a GSA-operated space be approved by the building manager. Approval should be documented in writing. This is due to the increased risk of fire from unauthorized uses and/or installation of portable space heaters.

FMR 102-74.190 states the following:

“Federal agencies are prohibited from operating portable heaters, fans, and other such devices in Government-controlled facilities unless authorized by the Federal agency building’s manager.”

All space heaters must be Underwriters Laboratories (UL) listed. A UL-listing mark on a product means that representative samples of the product have been tested and evaluated to nationally recognized safety standards with regard to fire, electric shock, and related safety hazards. All units must also have automatic safety switches that turn off the unit if tipped over accidentally.

Tenants should be reminded that extension cords should not be used with these heaters. They also should be reminded that all heaters should be kept at least three feet away from any combustible materials such as papers, boxes, and fabric drapes or partitions. The units should also not be placed near wet areas or in high traffic areas such as exit aisles. Space heaters should never be used in an area where flammable vapors may be present.

If new purchases are being made, consideration should be given to purchasing oil-filled heaters that pose less of a firesafety risk. Consideration should also be given to assuring

that space heaters are plugged into circuits dedicated for their use to reduce the potential for blown circuit breakers.

Finally, tenants should be reminded that the units should never be left on when employees are out of the office. Units should always be turned off before leaving the office for lunch or at the end of the day. The unit's cord should be checked periodically for frayed wire or cracked insulation.

Please forward this information to all appropriate personnel.

Should you have any questions about GSA's space heater policy, please contact me at (312) 353-4835.